



US 8 - WIS 35 (N) to US 53 Environmental Impact Statement Study Report

Transportation District 8 August 2001 Volume 1, Number 1

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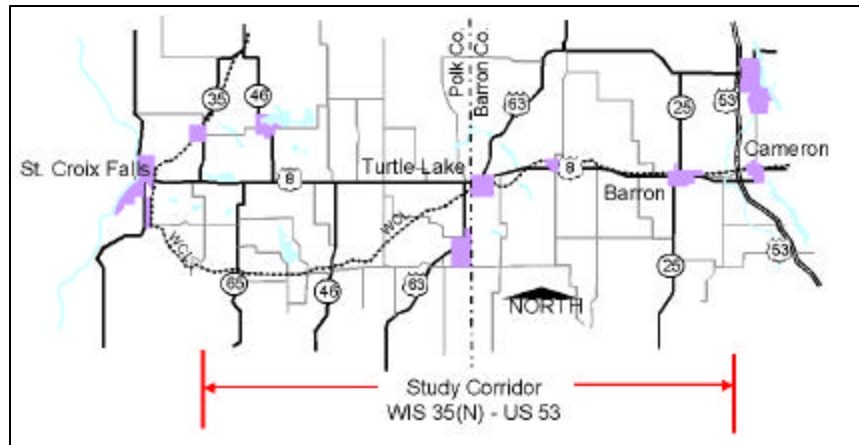
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If you have any questions or concerns about this project, contact any of the above representatives.

Greetings...This newsletter marks the beginning of an in-depth study of the US 8 corridor conducted by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT), in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). US 8 is a primary east-west corridor through northwest Wisconsin. The study limits begin at WIS 35 (N) east of St. Croix Falls and extend nearly 40 miles through Polk and Barron counties to US 53, west of Cameron. The result of the study will be an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).



The purpose of this study is to document the need to provide increased capacity for existing and future traffic demand and improve safety to reduce crash rates. The EIS study process will be very dependent on public participation to determine the existing and future transportation needs, develop alternatives that address those needs, and then assess the impacts of the alternatives on the physical, social and economic environment.

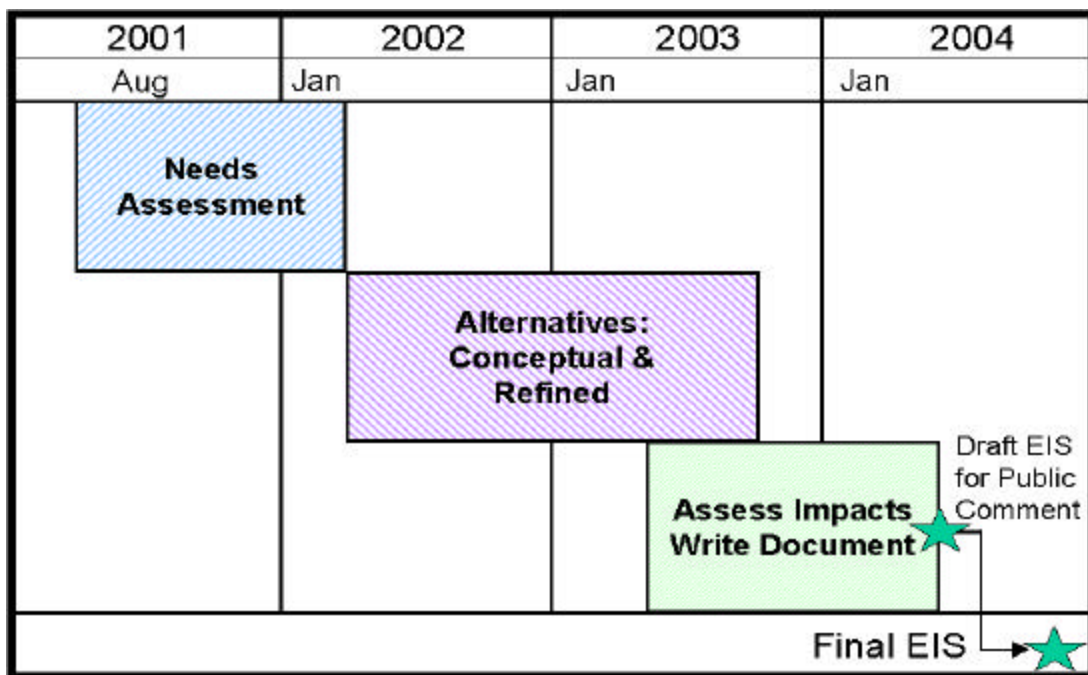
The final EIS document will be an important planning tool for local and county governments, and WisDOT. We hope that *how* the study unfolds will be of great interest to anyone who lives, works, travels or just takes pleasure in the US 8 corridor area.

See inside for more details, study schedule information and an important request for your input today on a US 8 Transportation Survey.

Introducing the US 8 EIS Study Team and Schedule

WisDOT has retained the consulting firms Strand Associates, Inc., Short Elliot Hendrickson Inc.(SEH) and EMCS to provide the public involvement, data collection, coordination, engineering and analysis activities involved with the Environmental Impact Statement process. This study will take about three years to complete. The study process is divided into three basic phases.

- First, a six-eight month Needs Assessment phase focusing on identifying corridor needs and data collection will begin this month.
- Second, conceptual alternatives will be developed over the following 12-15 months to address the needs brought out in the first phase, and refined based on input received from the public and state and federal agencies.
- Third, the last year of the study will be spent assessing the environmental and socio-economic impacts from each alternative and writing the EIS document and exhibits in preparation for the public's review.



US 8 EIS SCHEDULE

Needs Assessment Gathers Broad Range of US 8 Information

The Needs Assessment phase will gather ideas, concerns and priorities for the existing and potential future conditions along the US 8 corridor. Contributing to the information database are the public, local officials and state and federal cooperating agencies such as FHWA, US Environmental Protection Agency, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and US Fish & Wildlife. At the same time, data on existing traffic counts, crash history, environmental resources, existing land use and local plans, and roadway deficiencies will be collected by the study team.

How can you participate in this early phase?

Two key elements of public participation during the Needs Assessment are the US 8 Transportation Survey (*enclosed*) and focus groups.

Get In on the Baseline: Through the Transportation Needs Survey

This first newsletter is being sent to citizens within the villages of Turtle Lake, Almena, Range, Poskin; city of Barron; towns of St. Croix Falls, Balsam Lake, Apple River, Beaver, Almena, Clinton, Barron, Stanley, Clayton, Turtle Lake, and Maple Grove – we hope to reach over 7,500 households based on the name/address information received from county governments.

We ask that you fill out the enclosed survey and tell us about your experiences and your opinions regarding the US 8 corridor. The success of the survey depends on you. It will only take a few minutes – and no postage is necessary!

Please Note: *At the end of the survey you are asked to tell us if you want to remain on the mailing list for future US 8 EIS newsletters. It is important that you fill out this survey and include your name and full address to remain on the mailing list.*

Participate Through the Focus Groups That are Being Formed

WisDOT is sponsoring a series of focus groups in Barron and Polk county. The purpose of these focus groups is to help identify and prioritize the needs of US 8 from the standpoint of the local communities. The opinions and information gathered in the focus group process will assist Strand and SEH in the development of improvement alternatives that will be carried forward in the EIS.

A Citizens/Business Group and a Local Officials Group are being formed for each county. Limited opportunities to join the Citizen/Business Group for both counties are available. If you want to discuss participating, please contact Dan Carl at SEH by phone (800) 732-4362 or email dcarl@sehinc.com. Interested individuals should be aware that participation constitutes a significant time commitment of two hours per month over a five-month period.